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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

7950th meeting
Wednesday, 24 May 2017, 10.50 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Rosselli	(Uruguay)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Fernández Revollo
	China	Mr. Liu Jieyi
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulatta
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Italy	Mr. Cardi
	Japan	Mr. Bessho
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Zagaynov
	Senegal	Mr. Ciss
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Yelchenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Rycroft
	United States of America	Ms. Sison

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of South Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan and Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Shearer is joining the meeting via video-teleconference from Juba.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Shearer.

Mr. Shearer: Mr. President, I thank you for the opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in South Sudan and the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

It may seem unusual to start my briefing off with a weather report, but it is important to announce that the rains have arrived in South Sudan. These seasonal rains dictate almost every aspect of life in the country, including the cycle of conflict. Across the country, we are seeing the last push to position forces before roads become impassable for the next four months. And with that, the nature of conflict changes.

Significant military moves have been most evident in the north, on the west bank of the Nile River in Shilluk tribal areas, and in northern Jonglei, in the eastern part of the country, inhabited mainly by Nuer. In both areas, the Government's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) has captured former SPLA in Opposition strongholds and reinforced their positions.

In the former Unity State, in the centre of the country, the SPLA continues low-intensity battles. Declared a famine zone in February, the area remains highly volatile, with many displaced people. On 3 May, a base of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), located just 500 metres from Leer town, came under direct fire. Ghanaian peacekeepers responded robustly, returning fire, and repelled the attack. An internal investigation is under way to determine who carried out the attack and why. Sadly, it prompted some humanitarian organizations working alongside UNMISS to downsize their presence at a time when their efforts are desperately needed. They are brave people, but they should never be a target. If for no other reason, I condemn in the strongest terms that callous attack.

Intercommunal conflicts persist across the country. A long-standing tension between the Dinka Bor and the Murle communities in Jonglei in the east escalated dangerously, threatening hundreds of lives over the past few weeks. UNMISS has persisted with mediation efforts, and over the past two weeks, has supported the visits of a delegation led by First Vice-President Taban Deng Gai shuttling between the various communities. Yesterday, those efforts culminated in the signing of a joint cessation of hostilities agreement. It is only a start, but I am encouraged by the willingness of both sides to progress with further talks on substance, which, of course, we will continue to support.

In Greater Bahr el-Ghazal, in the west, clashes between the SPLA and opposition forces have continued, with 22,000 people arriving in the town of Wau from surrounding areas to seek refuge with the United Nations and with churches. The Government has consistently prevented access to areas outside of Wau, but recently an UNMISS Bangladeshi infantry patrol was able to reach the south-west areas of Wau, which had previously been off-limits, only to find the area completely abandoned and evidence of armed activity all around.

In the south, in the Equatorias, clashes between the SPLA and allied militias persist, with Yei town once again in the focus. Violence in Yei has been unrelenting, as the joint report released by ourselves and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights documented with respect to the events that happened between July 2016 and January 2017. The report, which was released last week, documents 114 killings by pro-Government forces. The extent of the abuses by opposition groups remains unclear, because our access to those areas has been impeded. But satellite imagery also corroborated field observations of the widespread burning of homes and villages.

we welcome the declaration on a unilateral ceasefire by President Kiir on Monday of this week, we must now make every effort to ensure that this time his commitments are honoured and implemented. The region and the Security Council should agree to monitor the situation closely and hold the South Sudanese Government and other relevant actors to account. We should all make it very clear that there is no time for playing games, and that there will consequences if agreements are breached.

It should by now be obvious to all that there is no military option and that only a political solution can resolve the conflict and bring peace to South Sudan. We therefore, once again, call on all parties to come to the table. A national dialogue could be an important way forward, but only if it is genuinely inclusive and led by impartial conveners at all levels. And there cannot be a meaningful political process unless the fighting is brought to an end.

While it is unfortunate that the deployment of the regional protection force has been significantly delayed, we welcome that it is now being deployed, and we hope that it will soon be fully operational. That force should contribute to giving the necessary political space to allow the parties to engage in a meaningful political process. However, we also agree with the Secretary-General that neither the regional protection force, nor the United Nations Mission in South Sudan represent a panacea to the crisis. Only a political process is.

The need to address the humanitarian situation, including ending all obstacles to relief efforts, grows more pressing by the day. The Secretary-General's report (S/2017/224) illustrates how the upswing in violence against aid workers has had a severe impact on humanitarian operations. That includes detentions, threats, physical assaults and killing. Such behaviour is simply unacceptable and is a grave violation of international humanitarian law. Humanitarian principles must be respected. The rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of relief across South Sudan must be assured. We pay tribute to the United Nations and its humanitarian partners for their efforts in that very difficult environment. We also commend the intensified efforts under way to prevent a large-scale cholera outbreak.

The international community owes it to the people of South Sudan to engage with renewed commitment and urgency. We welcome the intensified efforts now under way by actors in the region, including the recent visit by President Museveni of Uganda to Juba earlier this week. The world looks to the AU and IGAD to take the lead in efforts to set out a road map for peace. The Security Council must remain united in support of those regional efforts and contribute to ensuring that commitments are implemented. Important decisions, such as the joint declaration at the AU Summit in January, the IGAD communiqué of 24 March and the clear steps outlined by the Security Council in its presidential statement of 23 March (S/PRST/2017/4), must be followed up on and implemented.

We therefore call for continued close cooperation and coordination between the United Nations, the AU and IGAD. We commend the leadership shown by the Secretary-General and encourage him to continue play an active role. In that regard, we would welcome the inclusion in his next report of more concrete proposals on a way forward, including on how the United Nations can best support the region in facilitating an inclusive political process.

There can be no more business as usual on South Sudan. There should be no illusions — our commitment and engagement must be there for the long term. But let us, in the short term, seize on the recent commitments made by the Government and build on the sense of renewed urgency in the region, including that coming from Uganda and Kenya, to push for a solution. We must do all we can to bring the conflict to an end. That is our collective responsibility.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Uruguay.

I would lil · to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, Mr. David Shearer, for participating in this meeting and for his briefing, which gives us a complete overview of the latest developments in South Sudan, of which we have taken careful note.

Uruguay reiterates its deep concern and alarm at the political, security, humanitarian and economic crisis that South Sudan is going through. Today, I would like to refer specifically to the following: first, the launch of the national dialogue and the unilateral ceasefire declaration by the President of South Sudan, Mr. Salva Kiir; and, secondly, the performance of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the deployment of the Regional Protection Force.

Since January, UNMISS has deployed almost continuous long-duration patrols to Yei. The latest reached the area this week — despite warning shots being fired at them. Its presence has enabled human rights violations to be investigated and engagement to occur with stakeholders in the course of the conflict and, most importantly, to reassure civilians, who are feeling very vulnerable. Follow-up missions are planned.

The rains may bring a respite to large-scale military manoeuvres, but they complicate the humanitarian response and bring the inevitable spectre of cholera to South Sudan. To date, 7,700 cases have been reported. Over 60 per cent of the country will now be impossible to access by road or by dirt airstrips, and humanitarian efforts will have to rely on air and barge transport.

A focus of the humanitarian responders during this past month has been to support more than 20,000 civilians who fled the minute village of Aburoc in Upper Nile, after being displaced by SPLA and opposition fighting. Most arrived in Aburoc in a very weak state — the perfect conditions for cholera to tear through their numbers.

UNMISS helicoptered in a detachment of Rwandan peacekeepers to Aburoc in early May for a short-term deployment that then gave the confidence needed for humanitarian agencies to deploy immediately afterwards. Cholera has broken out in the town, but the improved water supplies and the presence of a strong medical response from agencies there have contained its spread and have undoubtedly saved many lives. Such a more nimble approach on the part of our peacekeepers working with others is a formula that we can replicate, along with the improved robustness I reported to the Council in my previous briefing (see S/PV.7930).

I applaud the humanitarians working in South Sudan. Their efforts in one of the toughest and most operationally difficult environments — and in the most remote places — have saved countless lives. I wish to particularly acknowledge the World Food Programme, which has pre-positioned over 90 per cent of its food aid for the coming rainy season. Yes, we face problems in gaining access to some areas. These obstacles are mostly posed by local actors, particularly where fighting is ongoing. However, I condemn the unacceptable levels of violence that continue to be directed towards aid workers, which include threats, arrests, assaults and even murder.

As the latest Secretary-General's 30-day report details, the deployment of the first wave of the regional protection force vanguard has begun. To date, all 60 members of the Bangladeshi construction-engineering advance team have arrived in Juba with their equipment, and the advance team of the Nepalese high-readiness company will be on the ground by the end of the month. The main bodies of those contingents are on track to arrive by July. Pending the final tax exemptions for the Rwandan advance infantry company, it should deploy in late June or July, and I understand that the equipment for the scheduled Ethiopian infantry company is being refurbished. It should deploy by August.

With the arrival of the rains, the focus of the conflict tends to shift from the battlefield to the political arena. Already, we are seeing signs of some political shifts. As you know, on 9 May, President Salva Kiir dismissed SPLA Chief of General Staff Paul Malong. After briefly leaving the capital and heading west to his home town of Aweil, Malong returned to Juba, and the situation seemed to calm. The President recently announced several changes to the structure and appointments of the SPLA and also replaced the Aweil governor. Most expect further changes and a possible reshuffling of some cabinet posts.

The President has also moved ahead with the national dialogue, with a formal launch on Monday this week in Juba, attended by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni. He again declared a unilateral ceasefire and pledged to review the cases of political prisoners. Those announcements are very welcome. There will be close scrutiny, however, of the number of prisoners who are actually released and whether the Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangements Monitoring Mechanism, the organization that was established by the peace agreement to monitor ceasefire violations and which is supported by UNMISS, can move freely to perform its ceasefire monitoring tasks. The proof of the pudding is, as they say, in the eating.

While the national dialogue should bring a welcome focus on reconciliation for it to be credible, it needs, as we have said before, to involve the genuine participation of opposition constituencies. Meanwhile, opposition groups, mainly outside the country, have come together around the common position and jointly denounced the dialogue.

As many Council members have acknowledged, States of the region hold significant influence on the

Last Monday, the President of South Sudan formally launched the national dialogue process and, at the same time, declared a unilateral ceasefire. We acknowledge that both actions point in the right direction, towards the peaceful settlement of the conflict in South Sudan, through a process of dialogue and not through military operations. However, it should be underscored that it is essential to carefully monitor the dialogue process and the effective implementation of the ceasefire. In that respect, we encourage continued efforts aimed at making the existing platform for dialogue increasingly more inclusive and representative of all South Sudanese. Only an inclusive process of dialogue will have the legitimacy needed to provide a way out of the conflict.

The international community, including the United Nations, the African Union and subregional organizations, must contribute in a coordinated fashion to ensuring that the dialogue in South Sudan meets the necessary conditions for legitimacy. We will also closely follow the implementation of the unilateral ceasefire by the Government, and we call on the other political and military stakeholders in the country to also put an end to hostilities throughout the territory of the country. The complete and immediate cessation of armed action in South Sudan is key to the viability of the dialogue process.

With regard to the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan, I would like to recognize the difficult work that it is carrying out to prevent further atrocities and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the neediest, all in an extremely dangerous operating environment. In that connection, the Council has been advised by the Secretary-General that, eight months after the adoption of resolution 2304 (2016), which established the Regional Protection Force, the deployment of some elements of that force has only just begun, and differences persist between the Government and United Nations as to the additional grounds needed by the United Nations and the tasks that the force will carry out. We therefore urge the Government of South Sudan to cooperate fully in the implementation of resolution 2327 (2016), including the deployment of the Regional Protection Force and the lifting of any restrictions on UNMISS, in accordance with the terms of the status of forces agreement.

I resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malok (South Sudan): I thank you, Sir, and the members of the Security Council for giving me another opportunity to address the Council. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. David Shearer, for his briefing.

The Transitional Government of National Unity takes note of the renewal of the mandate of the South Sudan sanctions regime and the Panel of Experts (resolution 2353 (2017)). The Transitional Government of National Unity reiterates it commitment to continue to cooperate with the Security Council and the Panel of Experts so that they can fulfil their mandate. My delegation still maintains that the use of sanctions is not the best solution for addressing the conflict in South Sudan.

The Transitional Government of National Unity also welcomes the recent arrival in South Sudan of the first contingent of the Regional Protection Force (RPF) and rejects the suggestion that it is hindering the RPF's deployment, since it has in fact been very cooperative. The delay in the RPF's deployment cannot be blamed on the Government alone since, as the Council knows, there are other factors operating in that regard.

Since the events of July 2016 that reignited the conflict in South Sudan, President Kiir has worked persistently to achieve lasting peace in the country. He has taken a number of positive steps to ensure the implementation of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, engaging with relevant stakeholders such as the leadership of the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission and the United Nations. He has announced several amnesties aimed at encouraging the rebels to lay down their arms and return to the fold so as to rebuild the country. Unfortunately, the other side has been unyielding, choosing to stoke the fires fuelling the conflict and taking the war to regions such as Greater Equatoria and some parts of Greater Bahr el Ghazal that had previously been relatively peaceful.

On Monday, 22 May, in Juba, President Kiir launched a national dialogue in his quest for peace. He has instructed a steering committee, led by national figures, to conduct across-the-board consultations and make the process as inclusive as possible, so that

political process. Yesterday, I met with the Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, President Festus Mogae, in Juba, who updated us on his engagements with regional actors over the past months. President Museveni, speaking at Monday's national dialogue launch, called for a review of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement, but made no mention of the peace agreement. In my recent meeting with him, together with United Nations Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan Nicholas Haysom, he also reiterated his outreach to opposition leaders, in particular concerning elections. At the same time, there are reports that Kenya is engaging with opposition figures based outside the country. I am encouraged to see Member States in the region stepping up their engagement. It remains critical, however, that a coherent and unified regional position on South Sudan be forthcoming.

As I mentioned last month (see S/PV.7930), it is now more than ever imperative to ensure that the Council unites on a common strategy to advance the political process in South Sudan. We acknowledge and thank Council members individually and collectively for their support of UNMISS and the humanitarian community, both of which are overcoming immense difficulties in order to make a real difference to people's lives. But unity of purpose will send the best signal to South Sudan's political leaders that they must focus first and foremost on the plight of their citizens.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing.

I now give the floor to those Council members who wish to make statements.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): I would like to thank Special Representative Shearer for his briefing today. It is always good to hear from him, although his report is indeed sobering.

Two thousand eight hundred — that is the average number of South Sudanese fleeing to neighbouring countries each day; 90 — that is the number of incidents and restrictions related to the delivery of humanitarian assistance reported for the month of April, and it is the highest for any month this year so far; 100 — that is the number of aid workers forced to relocate in April as a result of active hostilities; 84 — that is the total number of aid workers killed in South Sudan since the beginning of the conflict, including 17 this year alone, making South Sudan the most dangerous place in the world to be a humanitarian worker; unknown — that is the number of women and girls who have been raped this year as part of this senseless war or as a so-called tax, as they say, for leaving the country to seek refuge.

The Government announced a unilateral ceasefire on 22 May, two months after it had promised the Intergovernmental Authority on Development that it would do so, and only after pursuing offensives in multiple locations in South Sudan before the onset of the rainy season. Nor have we seen an end to the obstacles and threats the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has to face when carrying out its mandate. Most recently, they included violence on the west bank of the Nile River as UNMISS was trying to access vulnerable populations and, as Mr. Shearer just informed us, an attack on the UNMISS base in Leer this month. As he underscored, UNMISS needs access when civilians are in need of protection, not just once the fighting has stopped and all the civilians have fled.

We can only conclude from this that the parties still have no intention of taking seriously the steps outlined in the Security Council's 23 March presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/4). We condemn the recent military campaigns by South Sudanese Government forces, designed to disproportionately retaliate along ethnic lines and seize territory to gain a strategic advantage. We also deplore the violence instigated by those in opposition, which only exacerbates the situation and perpetuates this vicious cycle. Once again, we call on all parties to stop the violence, return to the negotiating table and give UNMISS and humanitarian aid organizations unhindered access. We commend UNMISS's tenacity in carrying out its mandate to protect civilians, enable the delivery of urgently needed humanitarian assistance and deploy the initial elements of the Regional Protection Force.

The only way to achieve a lasting solution to the conflict in South Sudan and put an end to the suffering it has caused is through an inclusive political process led by the South Sudanese themselves. We call on the United Nations, the African Union and their regional partners to closely coordinate their efforts to reinvigorate the process and chart a clear plan for the way forward. Last month (see S/PV.7930), we urged the Council to move forward with the tools at our disposal, such as further sanctions and an arms embargo. Since then, more people have suffered, more women and children have been raped and tens of thousands more have been displaced because of the fighting.

Today, we voted to extend the existing sanctions measures on South Sudan with our adoption of resolution 2353 (2017). Now we must back up our words with concrete action We will continue to conduct dialogue with Council members and regional and international partners in order to build support for additional measures to halt the violence, including sexual violence, in South Sudan, and to get the parties to return to the negotiating table. The terrible cost of our failure to act will continue to be born by the South Sudanese people and will only increase over time. I urge Council members to use the tools at our disposal as soon as possible and take action to stop the suffering.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I thank Special Representative David Shearer for his briefing and commend him for his good work in the past few months.

It is very understandable that we all remain extremely concerned about the situation in South Sudan on the security, political and humanitarian fronts. What we continue to see is lives lost and major displacement of the civilian population. If we fail to avert what may otherwise end up being a descent down a slippery slope, the consequences will be horrendous in both their geopolitical and humanitarian implications. At the moment, there is no greater priority, as the representative of the United States has said, than making sure that all the parties to the conflict take genuine steps to immediately cease all hostilities and violence in order to end the suffering of the South Sudanese people. In that context, we applaud the critical work of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and thank Special Representative Shearer for his lucid briefing on the issue. We do not have much to add to what he said with regard to the Regional Protection Force.

We also welcome the unilateral ceasefire and release of political prisoners declared by President Salva Kiir on 22 May. It is our hope that the Government will honour its commitments and take the necessary confidence-building measures. It is important that the Council acknowledge that development and urge all other parties to follow suit by immediately stopping the fighting. We would also like to underscore that the dire humanitarian situation still requires our urgent attention. Every possible measure must be taken to save lives and forestall famine. The international community must step up its humanitarian assistance. All parties on the ground should also facilitate safe and unhindered access, without conditions of any kind, so that humanitarian actors can reach those in need of lifesaving assistance.

But all of this — the ceasefire and the efforts to alleviate the humanitarian situation — can have durable meaning only if we can see a light at the end of the tunnel where the peace process is concerned. That continues to wallow in inconsistencies and confusion, to a large degree because of the lack of coordination among the parties that are attempting to help South Sudan achieve peace. Of course, that in no way implies that the lion's share of the responsibility does not belong to the parties of the conflict.

Lasting peace and security in South Sudan can prevail only through genuine dialogue and reconciliation. We reiterate our conviction that the 2015 peace agreement still remains an important framework for ending the conflict in South Sudan, and that its full implementation, through greater inclusivity, forgiveness and reconciliation, can restore peace and stability in the country. The parties have to be committed to implementing their agreement in good faith and keeping the national interest above all other concerns.

We still think that the national dialogue has real potential to facilitate the reinvigoration of the peace process. In that regard, the launching of the national dialogue and the swearing in of the Steering Committee members on 22 May represent, of course, steps in the right direction, but we want to emphasize once again the need for that process to be undertaken in all-inclusive manner in order to achieve the desired objective. We call on all parties to seize the opportunity to participate in the dialogue constructively and in good faith. The Security Council and the international community at large must contribute to making the national dialogue a success.

We are probably in a somewhat better situation now than we were months ago for moving ahead in the peace process. Regional efforts are being made to try to revive the peace process in South Sudan, and we believe that it is important to support those efforts. There is, in particular, a promising effort being deployed by President Museveni of Uganda, to which Mr. Shearer alluded broadly and which deserves close follow-up and support. President Museveni knows that he has the full support of the Ethiopian Prime Minister and the Chair of the Intergovernmental Authority on

Development (IGAD), as well as other members of that regional organization.

The Kenyan effort is designed to support that initiative. We look forward to the convening of an IGAD summit when it is appropriate and deemed to offer added value. In our view, the most critical element is that the region continue to speak in one voice, so that the international community and, above all, the Security Council can be on the same page. There is no greater damage that can be inflicted on a peace process than conflicting messages. They are the bane of any peacemaking effort.

We are pleased in that regard that the African Union (AU) and IGAD have always made sure that their efforts are always fully coordinated. We are now encouraged by the personal involvement of the new African Union Chairperson, as witnessed by his visit to South Sudan. The same is true of the Secretary-General and the active engagement of his Special Representative, Mr. Shearer, and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom.

All of those efforts call for greater cooperation and closer coordination. That is why we continue to attach indispensable value to a unified approach by the AU, IGAD and the United Nations in efforts to ensure a speedy and peaceful settlement to the conflict in South Sudan. In that connection, the joint press statement of 29 January by the AU, the United Nations and the IGAD still represents a useful framework for cooperation among those three organizations in their joint efforts to reinvigorate the South Sudanese peace process — the implementation of which remains the key to addressing the issue of South Sudan.

Mr. Rycroft (United Kingdom): I wish to thank Mr. Shearer for his briefing just now and for all of his excellent work.

We are meeting two months after President Kiir recommitted to a ceasefire in South Sudan, two months after the Security Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2017/4) with very clear steps. We should be reflecting today on two months of peace, two months of life-saving aid reaching those in need, two months of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) protecting civilians. Instead, we meeting today as South Sudan spirals deeper into crisis.

As we have heard so many times, the humanitarian and human rights situation is worsening, the economy is collapsing, and fighting has continued unabated. People are no longer fleeing in the tens of thousands but in the hundreds of thousands. More than 900,000 South Sudanese have now sought refuge in Uganda. Those figures underlie not only how severe the situation has become but also how hollow those promises sounded to the people of South Sudan when President Kiir made them two months ago. We all know what needs to happen — President Kiir must take the long-overdue steps to which he agreed in the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) statement in March and which we called for in our presidential statement. That means granting sustained humanitarian access, allowing the deployment of the regional protection force, enabling UNMISS to fulfil its mandate and, above all, bringing an end to the fighting — not just in words but through actions that make the people of South Sudan feel safe in their homes in their own country.

On Monday, President Kiir once again declared a unilateral ceasefire and said that he had once again agreed to consider the release of political prisoners. We welcome those statements, but the onus is now on him to prove that they are meaningful commitments, not just words reflecting convenient timing with the start of the rainy season when fighting is made more difficult. I note with scepticism but not surprise that on the day that the ceasefire was announced, Government offences continued in Yei, and attacks by militia groups continue still. We need to see an end to offensive operations and disproportionate responses. We need to see true inclusive engagement with the opposition and civil society, and, in turn, we need to see a commitment to a ceasefire from opposition groups as well.

President Kiir must begin withdrawing troops from parts of the country, disband ethnic militias and ensure that humanitarian assistance can reach those in desperate need. Sadly, the Government has repeatedly ignored the request of the Security Council, just as it has repeatedly ignored the requests of the African Union and IGAD. Instead of allowing humanitarian access, the Government has endangered the most vulnerable by denying aid to those facing famine in Unity state. Instead of being allowed to fulfil its mandate, UNMISS has faced sustained harassment and worse, with the Sudan People's Liberation Army threatening to shoot United Nations peacekeepers if they moved any further towards Wunkur in Unity state. Such moves are not designed to inspire confidence in the commitments of President Kiir.

It is long past time for the Government of South Sudan to show genuine commitment to peace and stability, including by reaching out to the opposition. We will, of course, support political efforts that are truly inclusive, but we must learn from the past and not make the same mistake of relying on the promise of dialogue alone. We will also need to keep up the pressure. By that, I mean that we must use all of the tools at our disposal to encourage the Government of South Sudan to take the steps required, and the opposition must follow suit. We need to show that there are consequences should they fail to do so. Earlier today we renewed the sanctions regime that enables us to do just that. We should be willing to use that regime to send a clear message to anyone who continues to fail to deliver peace. As I have said on numerous occasions in this Chamber, we also need to restrict the flow of weapons into South Sudan.

The Council has a responsibility to do all it can to bring peace to South Sudan. It is a responsibility that we are not yet fulfilling. All of us in this Chamber, in the United Nations and across the region must redouble our efforts. We owe it to the people of South Sudan.

Mr. Liu Jieyi (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China wishes to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for South Sudan, Mr. Shearer, for his briefing.

Thanks to the concerted efforts of all South Sudanese parties and the international community, the political reconciliation process in South Sudan has made some progress recently. President Kiir announced the formal launching of national dialogue and implemented a unilateral ceasefire, actions that China welcomes. The overall situation in South Sudan remains as complex as it is austere, and it still faces serious challenges in the areas of political security, economic development and the need to address famine. Meeting those challenges will require the consistent efforts of all South Sudanese parties and the international community.

First, it is central to actively promote a political solution in South Sudan. Attaining peace and stability is the common aspiration shared by all South Sudanese parties. A political settlement is the only possible solution to the question of South Sudan, and the key is to realize reconciliation in its true sense. We hope that all South Sudanese parties will take advantage of the opportunity offered by the national dialogue, abandon the mindset of a military solution, revert to the political settlement track, promote inclusive national dialogue, attract the extensive and active participation of all parties, resolve differences, enhance mutual trust and achieve peace, stability and development in South Sudan.

Secondly, it is essential to facilitate the mediation role of regional and subregional organizations. China appreciates the active mediation efforts by Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union. The international community should vigorously support Mr. Mogae, Chair of the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, and Mr. Konaré, High Representative of the African Union. The international community should strengthen its leadership, send a consistent message to the world, create synergies and resolve the question of South Sudan.

Thirdly, we must focus on the fundamental questions that relate to the conflict. Development is an important factor for ensuring peace, and underdevelopment is the underlying cause of the situation in South Sudan. The international community should actively help South Sudan through increasing development and input relating to agriculture, infrastructure and natural resources; providing support for South Sudan in developing its economy; and improving livelihoods so that the South Sudanese people can benefit from the peace dividend.

Fourthly, it is essential to strengthen the capacity-building of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). We hope that the Secretariat and UNMISS will strengthen their communication with the South Sudanese Government, improve the capability of UNMISS to perform its duties and the effectiveness of its operations, and strengthen its ability to deal with complex situations, while taking effective measures to strengthen the security and safety of peacekeeping personnel. The Government of South Sudan should continue to actively implement the joint communiqué with the Security Council and its relevant resolutions, support UNMISS in carrying out its duties and properly address and resolve problems related to cooperation.

The Chinese Government has always supported the peace process in South Sudan and provided assistance to its ability to South Sudan for its country-building efforts. To date, we have sent more than 1,000 peacekeepers to UNMISS. Not long ago, in response to the United Nations appeal, the Chinese Government

provided assistance in the amount of $5 million through the World Food Programme and also provided, through bilateral channels, 8,750 tons of food to assist South Sudan respond to famine. China remains willing to continue to play a constructive role in helping South Sudan achieve lasting peace, stability and sustainable development.

Mr. Aboulatta (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to begin my statement by thanking Mr. Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing today and for his efforts as Head of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) during the past reporting period in circumstances we know to be difficult.

Egypt will not go into the details relating to the humanitarian and security situation in South Sudan and our deep concerns about the suffering of civilians, who alone pay the price of the conflict. What the civilian population expects of the Security Council goes beyond statements of condemnation. Accordingly, we would like to emphasize the following points.

First, Egypt looks forward to seeing extensive and intensive efforts being made by the relevant international envoys in South Sudan to communicate with the Government, opposition and regional stakeholders so as to develop a time-specific operational plan of action aimed at achieving the cessation of hostilities and reviving the peace agreement. Further delay in achieving that will lead to increased complications and a deterioration of the situation on the ground. The lack of progress provides the parties to the conflict the argument that they need to continue fighting without political or legal constraints.

Secondly, the political situation and the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan require a unified front of opposition that would renounce violence, become a serious political partner representing all factions without narrow, tribal prejudices, and practice peaceful political opposition in the modern sense of the term.

Thirdly, Egypt hopes that yesterday's declaration of a ceasefire by President Kiir and the launch of a national dialogue represent a real beginning to overcoming the current political crisis. We also hope that the dialogue will involve a real platform for truth and overcoming narrow political differences. We hope that it will be a genuine beginning for new commitments to the peace agreement. In that context, we look forward to an inclusive dialogue that will include all factions of the opposition, as well as youth and women.

Fourthly, in parallel with the efforts to revive the political track, we must support efforts aimed at national reconciliation on the local and grass-roots levels, address the impact of the war and ensure achieving sustained peace. We therefore emphasize the importance of supporting the work of a number of civil society organizations in that regard.

Fifthly, Egypt looks forward to the implementation of the measures taken recently to restructure the Sudan People's Liberation Army as a step in the right direction towards building a professional national army capable of protecting all the citizens in South Sudan regardless of their political or tribal affiliations, subject to the law and held accountable to national authorities. The Security Council shoulders the responsibility of preventing a collapse of the State in South Sudan and preserving and supporting it in the future. In its experience addressing other conflicts, the Security Council knows very well that the vacuum left by such a collapse would only be filled by chaos.

Lastly, the parties have an urgent, moral, legal and human obligation to end all forms of violence, abide by international law and relevant international norms, shoulder their responsibilities with regard to civilians and ensure the safety of humanitarian workers.

In conclusion, we reiterate Egypt's support for UNMISS and Mr. Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, in their efforts to achieving peace in South Sudan.

Mr. Bessho (Japan): Japan is pleased that the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2353 (2017). I would like to thank Mr. Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his informative briefing, as well as for his active engagement and efforts to bring peace and stability to South Sudan.

Regrettably, Japan must once again express its deep concern about the situation in South Sudan. Many innocent people, including women and children, continue to suffer from the ongoing violence across the country, despite strong calls from the Council, the region and the international community to immediately cease hostilities. For instance, in April, tens of thousands of people were displaced in Upper Nile owing to the fighting and the Government's offensive

on the west bank of the River Nile. Around one-third of the entire population is now internally displaced or living as refugees in neighbouring countries, while two-thirds of the population are in need of food and other humanitarian assistance.

Japan is deeply concerned about the worsening humanitarian situation and reiterates its call for the parties to immediately cease hostilities and for President Kiir and the Government of South Sudan to fully uphold their primary responsibility to protect civilians. In that regard, Japan welcomes the commencement of the national dialogue process, as well as the recent declaration of a unilateral ceasefire by President Kiir. The ceasefire must be observed in every corner of the country and we urge opposition forces to do the same. The national dialogue will be productive only if it is genuinely inclusive, which requires the steering committee to listen impartially to all parties.

Japan appreciates the engagement of President Konaré, African Union High Representative for South Sudan, in consultation with the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission, the United Nations and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and asks for his further efforts in this critical phase.

Last week, Japan dispatched to South Sudan Ambassador Yoshifumi Okamura, a former colleague based in Tokyo, who is mandated to work on African affairs. He called on President Kiir and other leaders to follow through on their commitments concerning the cessation of hostilities, unimpeded humanitarian access, the rapid and smooth deployment of the Regional Protection Force and the national dialogue. He also met with leaders in African countries, including President Museveni of Uganda, President Condé of Guinea, Chairperson of the African Union, and Foreign Minister Workneh Gebeyehu of Ethiopia to encourage their further engagement.

Japan welcomes the Secretary-General's recent meetings with relevant regional leaders on the margins of the London Somalia Conference. Regional organizations and leaders play a crucial role in improving the dire situation and invigorating the political process. We encourage them to continue to work with the Secretary-General on points of leverage with the South Sudanese leadership.

Finally, amid those challenges, the first wave of the Regional Protection Force finally arrived in South Sudan in April, eight months after its authorization by the Council. The Regional Protection Force's full deployment must be completed expeditiously so that it can implement its mandated tasks. We hope that that will improve the situation on the ground, not only in Juba but throughout the country. We urge the Government of South Sudan and the troop-contributing countries to further cooperate to that end.

In that regard, Japan strongly condemns the attacks on the temporary base of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) in Leer on 3 May. All parties must fully cooperate with UNMISS, including by observing the relevant resolutions and the status of forces agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan concerning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

Mr. Cardi (Italy): I would like to thank the Special Representative Mr. David Shearer for his update on the situation in South Sudan.

The Security Council just unanimously extended the sanctions regime for another year, and we continue to view the current context negatively because of the grave violations of human rights, the ongoing humanitarian crisis and the ethnicity-based hate speech that is spreading. There is a substantial number of Italian non-governmental organizations in the country. Through them, we follow with apprehension the plight of the people. Despite the tragic situation that seems to have no end in sight, I would like to address three processes under way that have shown some potential and attempt to find constructive elements therein.

First, I would like to speak about the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) and the Regional Protection Force. The assertive posture of UNMISS enables the Mission to react rapidly on the ground. However, it does not deter the conflicting parties from intimidating its patrols and blocking humanitarian access, in violation of the Status of Forces Agreement between the United Nations and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan concerning the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. Data collected in April on such humanitarian access incidents show an intolerable situation. It is crucial that the Regional Protection Force be deployed in Juba without further delay to allow UNMISS to work more effectively in other parts of the country. The arrival of the first contingent in recent days is a positive step in that direction. We ask Juba to cooperate responsibly with the United Nations so that it

may fully deploy the Regional Protection Force in the shortest term.

Secondly, I turn to the ceasefire and national dialogue. Two days ago, the national dialogue was inaugurated in Juba and, as a follow up to the statement made by Intergovernmental Authority on Development on 25 March, President Kiir announced a unilateral ceasefire. In principle, the two events represent significant progress but the circumstances lead us to believe that the premise is not so promising. For the national dialogue to succeed, it must be genuinely inclusive and at least fully representative of all opposition groups and civil society, at the community and national level. The process remains devoid of those conditions. Until the opposition groups are fully involved in the process, they will not abandon warfare, as they jointly announced a few days ago.

Most of all, the process needs a ceasefire in order to flourish. That is the main precondition for the national dialogue. The Council continues to urge both sides to immediately and effectively suspend hostilities. However, as the ceasefire was declared, clashes continued. The Government announced the ceasefire unilaterally but its efforts would be appreciated only if its words were followed by action in retaining the Sudan People's Liberation Army on the ground.

Thirdly, with regard to international and regional mediation, we support the joint mediation of President Konaré, President Mogae, Special Envoy Haysom and Special Representative Shearer and commend their efforts. We hope that an action plan could be finalized soon to coordinate the steps and timeline of the mediation. We continue to believe that the regional stakeholders, in particular the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) are those most capable of breaking South Sudan's self-destructive cycle. They can do more for peace in South Sudan. We welcome the initiative launched in recent days by Uganda and Kenya. Their actions acknowledge the destabilizing impact of the South Sudanese crisis in the subregion, starting with the continuous flow of refugees. We look forward to the next Kampala conference on 22 June on that issue and trust that at the IGAD summit in June, Heads of State and Government will make substantive progress in finding common ground and unity in their approach to the crisis.

In the past month, we have constantly noted that the time to contain the tragedy is running out. It is up to the Government and opposition groups of South Sudan, first and foremost, to help improve the situation before time runs out. We therefore remind them that the solution to the crisis must be political and all political solutions require the will to compromise. Otherwise the Council will have to consider further options to maintain peace and security in the region.

Mr. Fernández Revollo (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We are grateful for today's meeting. It is very important for the Security Council to be updated on developments in the conflict in South Sudan. We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General Mr. David Shearer for his briefing on the situation in the country and for his excellent work at the helm of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

We are deeply concerned about the high levels of insecurity and the economic and humanitarian crisis affecting a large part of the population of South Sudan. Regrettably, there has been no improvement in the situation since last year. We reiterate once again that there is no military solution to this conflict. It is necessary to redouble our efforts to revitalize the political process and to call for a constructive dialogue between the parties in order to find a solution that will, first of all, make it possible to defuse tensions and put an end to armed confrontations. In that regard, we hail initiatives that contribute to that objective, such as the announcement of the unilateral ceasefire by President Salva Kiir on Monday, 22 May, when the members of the National Dialogue Steering Committee adopted their position. That event could signal an emergence from conflict, provided that there is true compromise on the part of both the Government and the opposition.

Bolivia welcomes the good offices of President Yoweri Museveni, President of the Republic of Uganda, who was present at the aforementioned event last Monday. On that occasion, he mentioned several points that I would like to highlight today. First, he spoke very appropriately about the danger of forgetting the common interests of the people and called for the unity of the South Sudanese people. Secondly, he also spoke about the respect that the people of South Sudan have for the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the need to revitalize that movement, stating that the use of force should be a last resort. In that vein the SPLA should not lose the trust of those whom it is supposed to protect.

As we have said many times, Bolivia believes that the support of regional organizations is essential in order to reach a solution to the conflict. It is they who should lead the processes. Neighbouring countries, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union and former Presidents Mogae and Konaré are all working to find a way out of the crisis. In that regard, we call for coordinated actions and the establishment of a strategy that would make it possible for us to deal with the issue in a comprehensive, unified fashion.

We are of the view that the three points proposed by Secretary-General António Guterres to resolve the conflict in South Sudan — the cessation of hostilities, the resumption of the peace process through inclusive dialogue, and unrestricted access for humanitarian assistance — provide the necessary focus for dealing with the matter. The will and commitment of the Government and the opposition are essential to ensuring the establishment of a true political process. The South Sudanese should take that first step, making it possible to achieve reconciliation. National dialogue should make it possible to have the broad participation of all concerned to identify the main problems affecting South Sudan and to reach a lasting peace.

We likewise express our concern at the terrible humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Thousands of internally displaced people and refugees in recent months find themselves in unacceptable conditions. There is a lack of basic services, and women and children are those principally affected. We hail the efforts of UNMISS to respond to those needs, in particular the effort to provide drinking water to internally displaced people in various areas. In that vein we call on the Government to cooperate with and facilitate the work of humanitarian agents and UNMISS.

The situation of insecurity and the escalation of violence in several regions of the country are also of great concern. They have led to the deterioration of the humanitarian situation and make it difficult to provide assistance to those affected. Compliance with the ceasefire and the cessation of facilities are indispensable.

We trust that the regional protection force will contribute to the lowering of tensions and to the protection of civilians who are trapped between two opposing forces. We hail the progress that is taking place in terms of the deployment of that force, and we urge cooperation and permission from the Government so that the force will be able to fulfil its mandate as quickly as possible.

Lastly, we wish to encourage UNMISS to continue its work. We place great value on the measures it is taking to increase the effectiveness of its work. We know how complicated the situation that they face on a daily basis is. We express our support and thanks for the work they are doing.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank you, Mr. President, for organizing this meeting, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, for the analysis that he has provided to us.

As Mr. Shearer pointed out, South Sudan is at a critical juncture, in which the hope of an improvement in the situation is unfortunately being threatened by a number of dangers and significant shortcomings in three areas.

First of all, with regard to security, the arrival of the rainy season should automatically reduce the level of fighting, just as it will ground helicopters and heavy equipment. However, we cannot say that the situation will improve. During the past three years of the conflict, we have seen that the rainy season only served to freeze the situation, with the fighting starting back up as soon as the dry season returned. We must remember that the outbreak of violence last year in Juba took place in July. We are therefore not immune to fresh violence or crises in the months to come. Moreover, in recent years the parties have not failed to use the rainy season to rearm. That is a constant in South Sudan. We must act to prevent such actions, which only feed the conflict. The imposition of an arms embargo would help in that regard.

The second issue is the humanitarian situation and the difficulties faced by the civilian population. South Sudan is experiencing a large-scale humanitarian catastrophe that is intensifying every day. In recent weeks, for example, fighting has continued to have an intolerable impact on civilians. We have seen it particularly in Upper Nile state. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has had to face many challenges in its efforts to provide assistance to the many displaced persons, and we would like to commend its efforts in that regard, as well as those of all humanitarian workers in South Sudan.

The spread of the cholera epidemic, highlighted by Mr. Shearer, is a real risk, while famine, or the risk of famine, continues to plague some areas of the country.

In that context, the cessation of hostilities and humanitarian access remain priorities, including during the rainy season. The parties must commit themselves unconditionally to those points, and UNMISS must be able to fully implement its mandate to protect civilians. More than nine months after its creation, the Regional Protection Force has finally begun to deploy, faced with the many obstacles that have been placed in its way there. It can contribute to the better protection of civilians. The authorities in South Sudan must allow for the full deployment of the force, without hindrance.

Thirdly and finally, the political process is also at a critical juncture. While the implementation of the peace agreement remains at a standstill, the opening of national dialogue can nurture the hope that the various constituents of South Sudanese society will finally be able to tackle the country's many problems. In order to achieve that, national dialogue must be conducted in a transparent, impartial and independent manner. In order to meet the objectives assigned to it, it is also essential that that dialogue be fully inclusive, including all political sensitivities, as well as civil society. Those actors should be able to maintain an unrestricted and fear-free dialogue, with respect for civil liberties. President Kiir's directive to security services to stop the harassment of opponents is encouraging. We hope that it will be implemented fully.

The mobilization of the international community remains essential to efforts to accompany, encourage and facilitate the political process with a view to achieving progress in the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. President Museveni's presence in Juba in recent days is an important sign of regional mobilization. We hope that it will help to convince South Sudanese actors to move forward on the road to peace. The Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the African Union, the United Nations and bilateral and multilateral partners in South Sudan must remain fully mobilized and fully coordinated, in order to move the process forward. That is essential.

In that regard, we welcome and support the efforts of the Special Representative, and those of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, to ensure that the international community speaks with one voice. For its part, the Council must continue to remind South Sudanese actors that they must work to make the necessary progress to get their country out of the conflict. We must remind them of our expectations, rally the parties to action and, if necessary, consider imposing sanctions on spoilers to the peace process. Here we welcome the one-year renewal of the sanctions regime that which we unanimously adopted this morning.

Given the current challenges, the Council must keep a close eye on South Sudan. It must ensure that the actions expected of South Sudanese stakeholders, as set forth in the presidential statement of 25 March, are taken.

The coming months can be an opportunity to take strides towards peace, failing which the experience of past years will be repeated and violence will resume.

Mr. Iliichev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Shearer, for the information he provided on the situation in South Sudan. We pay due tribute to our colleagues from the Secretariat, who have yet again presented a balanced assessment of the situation in their monthly report.

We note the deployment of the advance team of the Regional Protection Force (RPF), which began in May. It is our understanding that the general timetable for deployment is being adjusted, but that is not the fault of the South Sudanese. Juba has remained constructive regarding the matter of the RPF, as demonstrated by the Government's decision to provide land parcels for the deployment of the force. We call upon the Secretariat to continue to engage with Juba so as to resolve all pending issues in connection with the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), including the creation of mechanisms for the swift resolution of visa issues and the definition of arrangements for the deployment of the RPF while upholding the basic principles of peacekeeping.

We share the concern of colleagues regarding the disastrous humanitarian situation in the country and note the efforts made by the United Nations to improve it. We appeal to all sides in South Sudan to ensure conditions conducive to the provision of humanitarian assistance to those in need, and we welcome the measures taken by the Government to provide humanitarian access to food-insecure regions.

We would be remiss were we not to note the assistance provided to South Sudan by neighbouring countries, in particular the Sudan, which has opened border crossing points, and Uganda, which is hosting a significant number of refugees from South Sudan. We would like also to emphasize that the root causes of the famine in a number of provinces in South Sudan are not just human-induced. In some areas, just like in neighbouring Somalia and Kenya, famine is due to adverse weather conditions. Representatives of international humanitarian organizations have spoken about this issue as well.

We share the view that stabilization in South Sudan is possible only if a full cessation of hostilities is ensured and an inclusive political process launched. In this regard, we welcome Salva Kiir's announcement, in the framework of the implementation of the peace agreement, to conduct nationwide dialogue. We also welcomed the recent oath-taking by members of the executive committee. It is our hope that the Government and the opposition will take measures to make this process more inclusive.

We welcome Salva Kiir's declaration of a cessation of hostilities. We hope that this decision will be implemented and call upon the opposition to take analogous measures. We note the personal efforts of the Secretary-General, António Guterres, to find a solution in South Sudan. We support the African Union-United Nations-Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) coordination initiative aimed at ensuring peace, stability and security in South Sudan. It is our hope that in the near future this cooperation will take shape on the ground.

It is encouraging to note that more active and coordinated efforts are being made by regional players for a settlement in South Sudan. We hope that the UNMISS working group on hate speech will continue to work effectively. We would like to remind colleagues of the relevant provisions of resolution 2327 (2016), namely, on the need to curb such incitement on their territories through the use of social networks.

Given the general situation in the country, the Russian delegation today supported the adoption of Security Council resolution 2353 (2017), which extends the sanctions regime against South Sudan. Our position regarding a hardening of sanctions measures has not changed. Solid peace in South Sudan is not going to be brought about by a Security Council arms embargo but, rather, by progress towards a political solution as well as by targeted measures for the disarmament of civilians and the demobilization and reintegration of combatants. We also believe that there is a need to heed the views of regional leaders to the effect that discussions on the levying of additional restrictions on Juba would be untimely.

Against this backdrop, we call attention to the duplicity of the approaches of certain colleagues who in this Chamber loudly champion an arms embargo, but, outside of it, bring pressure to bear on the independent experts of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2206 (2015) concerning South Sudan who are investigating their possible involvement in providing weapons to South Sudan.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I thank the presidency of Uruguay for drawing attention to the growing crisis in South Sudan and express my appreciation to Special Representative of the Secretary-General Shearer for his comprehensive briefing.

Kazakhstan is of the view that the rapidly deteriorating humanitarian and security conditions as well as the escalating number of internally displaced people should compel us to take immediate action on various fronts: political, security, humanitarian and development.

We are alarmed by the increase in the number of humanitarian incidents, the highest recorded in a single month in 2017. Both the Government and all non-State actors, given the gravity of the prevailing food insecurity, should ensure unhindered humanitarian access, especially to famine-affected locations.

We are also witnessing unprecedented levels of violence against aid workers, with an alarmingly high death toll, which makes South Sudan one of the most perilous countries in the world. We urge the Government and all non-State actors to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and bring the perpetrators of such acts to justice.

Kazakhstan is alarmed at the fact that UNMISS is encountering bureaucratic impediments to its operations and freedom of movement. Any peacekeeping mission must, in order to be effective, have its host country comply with the obligations set out in the status-of-forces agreement. We welcome the initial deployment of the Regional Protection Force, as seen in the setting up of the tactical helicopter unit, the engineering

company and the high-readiness company. At the same time, we urge that the final tax exemptions be granted for the equipment of the Rwandan forces, together with the finalization of other remaining procedural issues.

Kazakhstan's position is that there can be no military solution to any conflict, and South Sudan is no exception. Only inclusive and transparent dialogue, as well as implementation of the peace agreement, can result in genuine reconciliation. In this regard, Kazakhstan welcomes the declaration of unilateral ceasefire made by President Salva Kiir, as well as his promise to release political prisoners. Even though tensions are high, we need to demand a cessation of hostilities from all parties to the conflict and introduce security-sector reforms in the Sudan People's Liberation Army law-enforcement, judiciary and correction systems. This is necessary to ensure the rule of law and put an end to all impunity.

The involvement of women and youth must be important components of the conflict-prevention and resolution process, together with disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. In addition, vigilance and checking the flow of illicit weapons is fundamental to ending armed conflict.

Let me say in concluding that Kazakhstan will lend its full support to the concerted efforts of the United Nations, IGAD and the African Union's Peace and Security Council in the pursuit of national dialogue in South Sudan.

Mr. Yelchenko (Ukraine): I join other colleagues in thanking Special Representative David Shearer for his insightful briefing.

I want to highlight three points: the security situation, the political process and the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

First, Ukraine strongly condemns the violence in South Sudan, which continues to result in civilian casualties, massive displacement and severe food shortages. It is shocking that this violence highlights a startling level of impunity, as the perpetrators of gross human rights violation generally remain unpunished.

We have taken note of the unilateral ceasefire declared by President Salva Kiir last Monday. It is important that this announcement be translated into concrete deeds, which requires ensuring that those on the ground follow instructions from the top and that there is a mechanism for holding those breaching the ceasefire to account. It goes without saying that a long-lasting peace can be achieved only through a genuine commitment of two parties. In this vein, we urge the Sudan People's Liberation Movement in Opposition to cease hostilities and join the ceasefire declared by President Kiir. Any delay in doing so will only lead to more suffering for the South Sudanese people.

Secondly, we continue to believe that a comprehensive political dialogue is the only way to settle the conflict in South Sudan. In this regard, we look forward with cautious optimism to the work of the National Dialogue Committee, the inauguration of which took place earlier this week. It is crucial to ensure that all major groups of South Sudanese society are represented in the Committee. Otherwise, it will be impossible to achieve an inclusive political process aimed at healing the wounds of the war and paving the way to long-awaited peace and stability. My delegation welcomes the active engagement of regional actors in advancing peace in South Sudan. It is important to keep all regional initiatives as well as those of the broader international community coordinated and synchronized.

My third and last point is on UNMISS. We regret that, due to a number of impediments, the ability of UNMISS to implement its mandate remains extremely limited. The Mission and humanitarian actors must have unhindered access to affected areas to be able to help those in need, in particular in the areas affected by armed clashes. We cannot stress enough that the freedom of movement of UNMISS and humanitarian organizations is not some kind of privilege to be granted or taken away on a whim, but their right, respect of which defines the ability to carry out their mandated tasks.

Given the deteriorating security situation in South Sudan, UNMISS should be ready to respond to any further scenarios. In this vein, Ukraine, as one of the countries contributing troops and police to the Mission, welcomes the significant work undertaken to enhance the ability of UNMISS to protect civilians, better plan its response to crisis situations and increase staff safety and security. Ukraine also looks forward to the early commencement of operations of the Regional Protection Force in South Sudan, as envisaged in resolution 2304 (2016). We call on the Government to provide all necessary assistance, including granting customs clearances and visas for participating units.

Mr. Ciss (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): The delegation of Senegal would like to thank the Uruguayan presidency for taking the initiative to organize today's important meeting on the situation in South Sudan. I also wish to thank Mr. David Shearer, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), for the quality of his briefing.

The humanitarian crisis in South Sudan, in addition to the famine in several parts of the country, calls for urgent action by the international community. Indeed, human rights violations must be brought to an end as soon as possible, and the civilian population, including the numerous internally displaced persons fleeing the fighting that has returned to several parts of the country, must be protected. Efforts should also be made to keep these same populations in need from succumbing to famine.

This concern to put an end to the suffering of the people of South Sudan must also motivate the different parties to the conflict which must immediately stop fighting and resume the dialogue in order to implement the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. In this regard, we wish to salute the unilateral ceasefire decided by President Salva Kiir in order to create the conditions needed for the process of national dialogue aimed at ending the civil war. Indeed, this national dialogue, announced by President Kiir last December, if it were to be inclusive, free and transparent, could help the return of peace to the country. We therefore hope that the ceasefire will finally materialize on the ground so that the dialogue process can start.

Furthermore, my delegation would like to encourage all the initiatives announced by the countries of the region for revitalizing the political process. Indeed, we believe that regional actors, in particular the countries of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, have a clear role to play in the search for stability and sustainable peace in South Sudan. That is why we welcomed the recent visit to Juba made by President Museveni. In this regard, we also believe that it is time for the stalled peace process to be revived on the basis of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan because we are convinced that there can be no military solution to the crisis. But if that is to occur, the different actors will have to show real political will to put an end to a conflict that has lasted for more than three years.

The Senegalese delegation welcomes the progress made in the preparations for the deployment of the Regional Protection Force, the first elements of which have already arrived in Juba. However, we should note that little progress has been made in the discussions between UNMISS and the Government of South Sudan regarding the distribution of tasks for the Regional Force at Juba International Airport. We therefore call for more cooperation from the South Sudanese Transitional Government on the role of the Regional Protection Force in Juba. Accordingly, we encourage the South Sudanese authorities to take all necessary steps for the deployment of the Force without further delay.

As for UNMISS itself, whose resolute and courageous action we salute, we must admit that, despite certain improvements, it continues to face a number of recurring restrictions on the freedom of its movements, which naturally continues to undermine its ability to carry out swift actions in the event of an attack on civilians, and this in a context of increasing ethnic violence, in violation of the status-of-forces agreement. We therefore welcome the efforts of UNMISS, which, despite all the difficulties encountered, continues to operate in a hostile environment. We would also like to pay tribute to the contributing countries for their dedication to the cause of peace in South Sudan.

Unfortunately, targeted attacks and threats against humanitarian workers are also continuing, as are restrictions on humanitarian access to parts of the country. We therefore call on all actors to stop the hostilities immediately and allow UNMISS and humanitarian workers to gain access to civilians in need.

Mr. Skau (Sweden): Let me begin by joining others in thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, David Shearer, for his comprehensive briefing this morning. We also welcome the Council's decision today to extend the restrictive measures imposed by resolution 2206 (2015) related to South Sudan. It is important that the members of the Panel of Experts be reappointed without delay so that they can continue their important work.

The dire political, security and humanitarian situation in South Sudan remains of great concern. Despite repeated calls from the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU) and the Security Council, little progress has been made in finding a solution to the conflict. While

all South Sudanese have the opportunity to air their grievances. The new initiative by no means replaces the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan; rather, it is an opportunity to accommodate views and address issues that the Agreement does not tackle, and is thus complementary to it. The national dialogue will be inclusive, free and credible, because the Government is not leading or controlling the process.

Effective from 22 May, and in accordance with the Security Council's request for an immediate ceasefire as a vital prerequisite for the credibility of any national dialogue, in his speech launching the national dialogue President Kiir declared a unilateral ceasefire, in order, as he said, "to create an environment for inclusive dialogue and to facilitate the movement of humanitarian aid to famine-stricken areas." In addition, he warned the armed and security forces against harassing rebels and opposition members who decide to join the national dialogue. These important pronouncements represent a genuine effort on the Government's part to create conditions conducive to a free and successful dialogue process.

In response to the Security Council's request for an immediate end to the obstructions and attacks on all the national and international humanitarian personnel who are bringing much-needed, lifesaving assistance throughout South Sudan, President Kiir stressed in his statement that the unilateral ceasefire will facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid to famine-stricken areas. Instructions to that effect have already been given to field commanders to ensure that humanitarian organizations are allowed unimpeded access. The Transitional Government of National Unity will neither impede nor deny access to humanitarian actors. It is our responsibility to ensure that peacekeepers and humanitarian workers are not caught in any crossfire during active fighting.

In conclusion, since the signing of the 2015 peace agreement, the Transitional Government of National Unity has been committed to implementing it in the letter and the spirit so as to achieve permanent peace in our country. It will continue to leave no stone unturned in order to achieve that goal. Ultimately, however, it will be incumbent on the rebel movements to meet the Government halfway if they are serious about finding a durable solution to the conflict. The Transitional Government of National Unity urges the Security Council and the international community to put pressure on those groups to join the national dialogue with a view to achieving peace.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.